

VZCZCXRO3021
OO RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHRL #0749/01 1581158
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 061158Z JUN 08
FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1387
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDRUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USAF RAMSTEIN AB GE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHRL/USDAO BERLIN GE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BERLIN 000749

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/06/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [GM](#) [RS](#) [GG](#) [UP](#)
SUBJECT: GERMANY/RUSSIA: CHANCELLERY VIEWS ON MAP FOR
UKRAINE AND GEORGIA

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JEFF RATHKE. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY. EUR Deputy Assistant Secretary David Merkel discussed Russian political developments and Ukrainian/Georgian MAP with Deputy National Security Advisor Rolf Nikel and Chancellery Director for East European and Central Asian Affairs Norman Walter June 4. Because of DAS Merkel's long relationship with Nikel, the meeting was warm and friendly, which facilitated a frank exchange of views. Nikel agreed that Russia should have "no say" over who was allowed to join NATO, but emphasized that it was important that any future NATO enlargement be part of a "broader vision" of how the Alliance planned to engage Russia. Nikel noted that every round of NATO enlargement since the end of the Cold War had been "accompanied by some step in the direction of Russia." Both Nikel and Walter raised concerns that if MAP were pushed forward too quickly in Ukraine, where public opinion is bitterly divided on the issue of NATO membership, it could prove destabilizing and "split" the country. They also emphasized that they do not expect a decision on MAP at the December NATO foreign ministerial. However, they were open to maintaining a regular dialogue on these issues in the coming months and were receptive to DAS Merkel's efforts to spell out some indicators that would help determine whether Ukraine and Georgia were on the right path to MAP. END SUMMARY.

Read-out

12. (C) DAS Merkel began the meeting, at the request of Nikel and Walter, by giving a short read-out on the highlights of his just completed visit to Moscow. Merkel noted that he had emphasized to his Russian interlocutors the importance of maintaining a good investment climate, especially in regard to the TNK-BP oil company, which was the single largest foreign investor in Russia. Merkel noted that if the Russians prevented operations, it would have a negative effect on production and the investment climate, suggesting a return to the 1990's manner of doing business. Merkel also remarked that the press tended to focus too much on the supposed differences between Putin and Medvedev, which were really not that great, given the Medvedev had worked under Putin for the past 17 years. Merkel thought that Medvedev might use his June 5 trip to Germany, his first to Europe as president, as a "coming-out party" in addressing foreign policy issues, given that these issues were not discussed in great detail during FM Steinmeier's visit to Russia in May. Merkel noted that there was a great deal of speculation in Moscow about the Putin-Medvedev tandem and the possibility of a forthcoming power struggle, with most interlocutors

believing that Medvedev would win out in the end.

MAP

13. (C) DAS Merkel said he was curious how Medvedev would address Ukraine during his visit to Berlin and how the Chancellor intended to respond. He noted that Putin had been surprised to see the NATO Bucharest Summit Declaration language, which flatly states Ukraine and Georgia will become members of NATO. Nikel joked that Putin was not the only one to be surprised by the Bucharest language, intimating that it went a lot farther than many German officials had expected. Nikel emphasized, however, that notwithstanding the very forward-leaning declaration, no decision had been taken at Bucharest on offering Ukraine or Georgia MAP and that Germany did not expect a decision on MAP to be taken at the December NATO foreign ministerial. He said that the December ministerial would be the "first" assessment, indicating that further assessments would follow.

14. (C) Nikel also emphasized that the geo-strategic context of a Georgian accession to NATO was quite different from that of Ukraine. While Georgia was "just a bug on the skin of the bear," Ukraine was inseparably identified with Russia, going back to Vladimir of Kiev in 988. While acknowledging that Russia should have "no say" over who was allowed to join NATO, it was important that any future NATO enlargement was part of a "broader vision" of how the Alliance planned to engage Russia. Nikel noted that every round of NATO enlargement since the end of the Cold War had been

BERLIN 00000749 002 OF 003

"accompanied by some step in the direction of Russia" (i.e., creation of the Joint Partnership Council in 1997 and upgrade of the PJC to the NATO-Russia Council in 2002). Nikel said Germany thought it was wrong to see MAP as a "tool" to facilitate democratic and military reforms in countries like Ukraine and Georgia, when it was really the last step to NATO membership. NATO was a defense alliance that existed for the benefit of its members "as a hedge against whatever might happen." Nikel said it was important to take the Article 5 obligation of the NATO Treaty seriously and be prepared to explain to parliamentarians why the Alliance should be willing to defend these countries.

Ukraine

15. (C) Nikel raised three specific concerns about Ukraine that he felt made it risky at this stage to offer it the membership action plan (MAP): 1) overall low public support for NATO membership, 2) a deep divide between the eastern and western parts of the country on this question, and 3) a weak government with a small majority in the Rada. Walter agreed and thought that MAP and the issue of NATO membership could "break up the country" if pushed forward too quickly. He noted that the three leadQg political leaders were "all in opposition to each other," creating a great deal of political instability. Each took foreign policy positions based on domestic political considerations, with little regard to the long-term effects on the country. In this environment, it was difficult to gauge whether there was a genuine commitment to pursuing NATO membership or whether it was just a convenient position to take in the current power struggle. Walter said greater political "maturity" was necessary in order for Ukraine to be in a position to be taken seriously for MAP and eventual NATO membership.

16. (C) Nikel also raised concerns about whether Ukrainian officials, given their long historical ties to Russia, could be trusted not share classified NATO documents and information with Moscow. DAS Merkel suggested that the U.S. and Germany work together in the coming months to define some steps that Ukraine could take to demonstrate that it is ready forQAP. These could include: having a functioning and

stable government, demonstrating government support for NATO that goes beyond President Yushchenko, maintaining support for a NATO bid even if the government were to change before December, and carrying out a public education program. Nikel and Walter agreed that this would be a useful exercise and encouraged a regular dialogue on these issues in the coming months.

Georgia

¶7. (C) Nikel noted that President Saakashvili would be coming to Berlin June 25 to meet with Chancellor Merkel, which the Germans saw as a good opportunity to reaffirm the importance of Georgia making further progress on democratic and rule of law reforms and not letting itself be provoked into doing "stupid things" by the Russians. Nikel claimed that Germany was just as brutally frank with the Russians, "telling them square in the face" that the more they provoked the Georgians, the sooner Georgia would get MAP. Nikel said the Germans hope to use the June 12 Friends of Georgia Quad meeting in Berlin to coordinate ways of positively influencing Russian and Georgian behavior. He noted that it was still not clear whether there would be a full Friends of Georgia meeting on June 13 -- the Russians had not indicated whether they were coming. (Note: We understand that in his meeting with Merkel June 5, Medvedev confirmed that the Russians would indeed attend.)

¶8. (C) Nikel also noted that German National Security Advisor Heusgen planned to call Georgian Foreign Minister Tkeshelashvili right after Russian President Medvedev's June 5-6 visit to Berlin. Heusgen wanted to give her a read-out on the visit in order to help prepare President Saakashvili for his meeting with Medvedev on the margins of the June 6-8 St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. DAS Merkel welcomed the German initiative, noting that the outreach would be much appreciated by the Georgians and make them feel like they are part of the "team." He noted that the goal was to get all sides involved in Abkhazia to calm down and

BERLIN 00000749 003 OF 003

de-escalate tensions. He said in terms of managing Georgia, it was important to acknowledge to them that we view Russian actions as provocative.

Comment

¶9. (C) This meeting confirmed that the Germans remain very reluctant about extending MAP to Ukraine and Georgia, especially in the short term. We have our work cut out for us in convincing them to agree to MAP at the December NATO foreign ministerial. However, it is positive that the Germans are open to a regular dialogue with us on this issue and are willing to discuss the kinds of progress in Ukraine and Georgia that might make MAP more acceptable to them.

¶10. (U) This cable was cleared by DAS Merkel.
TIMKEN JR